out of contributions by the sponsors and from delegates fees.

About 3,400 delegates, both Indian and foreign, attended the Conference. Exhibitors from 14 foreign countries, in addition to domestic companies, participated in the Exhibition held to show-case Indian petroleum industry to the world. The Petrotech-2003 enabled experts and other participants to share their experience and knowledge, assess the trend in global petroleum industry with particular reference to India, and discuss mutual cooperation for business development.

Allocation of exploration work

723. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has 3 per cent of world's oil reserves;

(b) if so, the total sedimentary area and the proven area having crude oil and gas as on 31st December, 2002;

(c) what is the anticipated monthly rate of production of crude oil and gas from 1st January, 2003;

(d) the steps being taken to explore and exploit virgin sedimentary areas during 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06; and

(e) in what manner the work is allocated among ONGC, OIL and foreign firms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) India, including its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) has more than 4% of the world's total sedimentary basins. Worldwide, sedimentary areas are recognized to be the possible habitats of hydrocarbon reserves. Total sedimentary area of India, as on date, has been estimated to be about 3.14 million square kilometre (Sq. Km.), of which in seven sedimentary basins encompassing an area of about 0.52 Million Sq. Km. presence of hydrocarbon has been established and are on production.

(c) The monthly rate of production of crude oil and natural gas in the 4th quarter of 2002-2003 (January to March, 2003) is estimated to be 2.8 Million Metric Tonne (MMT) and 2.4 Billion Cubic Meter (BCM) respectively.

(d) Besides, pre-exploratory works by the Directorate General of Hydrocarbon during this period, Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC), Oil India Ltd. (OIL) and Private/Joint Venture Companies will put in exploratory efforts such as the surveys and drilling of wells in the areas where they hold Petroleum Exploration Licenses (PEL). Production operations in virgin area can start only after a hydrocarbon discovery is made followed by appraisal and establishment of techno-economic viability, for which no time frame can be laid down.

(e) As per the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP), exploration blocks are offered through the process of international competitive bidding, where National Oil Companies and private parties, including foreign companies, can participate.

Shortage of LPG in Kerala

724. SHRI N. K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that many places in Kerala are experiencing acute shortage of LPG for the last few months;

(b) if so, the reasons for the indefinite delay in supplying LPG cylinders to customers and the arrangements made to overcome the shortage;

(c) whether Government propose to consider to reduce the booking backlog experienced in the worst hit rural areas of Kerala; and

(d) the number of newly allotted LPG connections in Kerala during this year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (c) The supply of LPG has been adversely affected in Kerala during the months of December, 2002 to January, 2003 due to the unplanned shut down of refinery of M/s Reliance Industries Limited, M/s Kochi Refinery Limited and the strike of LPG bulk transporters. Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have since made arrangements to make up the shortfall by operating bottling plants in the extended hours and Sunday/ holidays. Additional packed LPG supplies are also being arranged from the neighbouring States to meet the shortage. It is expected that the supply of LPG in Kerala would be normal by the 1st week of March, 2003.